

obtaining the requested sum for the ship. During this time, ROYAL ZULU had been rusting at her dock, gathering more debts as her berthing fees mounted. To avoid any further unnecessary debt, Finansbank petitioned the admiralty court to auction the ship for the best possible price. The court appointed Michael James, a leading South African ship auctioneer, to handle the sale. Mr. James promptly inspected the ship but had no kind words about her. Of ROYAL ZULU he said: "She is totally unseaworthy, and I doubt the Bureau Veritas would classify her or allow her to leave the harbour. She requires new generators and I suggest that she be immediately drydocked as I can see a tremendous amount of growth on the hull. The electrical system, including the wiring, is extremely dangerous and brittle. The passenger accommodation is appalling, and I can't place a value of more than R85,000 on her." (By this time, R1 = U.S.\$1.00.)

On December 10, 1982, ROYAL ZULU was auctioned at what was to be the first of several auctions for her. She was sold to a Mr. T. D. Maharaj for R126,500. At a press conference following the auction, Maharaj stated that he would refit and rename ROYAL ZULU and operate her on harbour cruises as well as on more adventurous trips as far as Cape Town and Mauritius. The plans, rather ambitious for what essentially was a day ferry, came to nothing. Mr. Maharaj backed out of the sale two days later, saying that he was worried about the additional debts owed by the ship.

ROYAL ZULU remained tied at the Ocean Terminal, deteriorating rapidly, while another auction was arranged. This time, it was decided that she would be sold "as is, where is, free of all existing debts and charges". On February 25, 1983, she was auctioned off for R110,000 to a syndicate known as Industrial Equipment Leasing and Sales. At the auction, the company had no clear plans for the ship, and failed to come up with more than the R10,000 deposit. Yet again, the sale was cancelled and another auction was arranged.

The third auction was held on March 25, 1983. This time, the dilapidated ROYAL ZULU fetched only R85,000. After the auction, the new owner, a Mr. Bert Davids, said that he had no fixed plans for the ship. He said: "I'm not really sure what I will do with it except use it as a luxury cruiser, which my three sons can use to go fishing".

However, ROYAL ZULU reappeared late in 1983 operating excursions under the banner of Royal Cruise Lines (Pty) Ltd., a company not to be confused with the large Greek cruise line of similar name. Prior to re-entering service, the ship was sent to a shipyard and refurbished to the tune of R1,000,000. Apart from a complete technical reconditioning, the ship's passenger accommodation was gutted and replaced. The new interior offered full air conditioning, a 110-seat restaurant, a lounge, a disco, three bars and a private functions room. The refitted ship looked quite spruce and jaunty, and it seemed as if she finally had achieved respectability.

Despite all the effort put into the refit, the ship's new career did not last more than a few months. For reasons known only to itself, the South African Liquor Licencing Board refused to give the ship a licence to sell liquor on board. The result was that the ship had to make "dry" cruises which did not attract the party-going crowd that were to have been her new clientele. Shortly after the ship entered service, Royal Cruise Lines announced that ROYAL ZULU had been sold by private sale to British interests and soon would be leaving South African waters for England.

Instead, ROYAL ZULU became something of a mystery ship. She never left for England. The only voyage she made for her new owners was a short trip across Durban Harbour in mid-1984. This was to an unused berth near the container terminal, where the ship was to remain for almost a decade. Her owners, listed as C. H. Bailey Plc., never operated the ship in any form of commercial service. Strangely enough, however, they always kept up with berthing fees and retained a shipkeeper on board at all times. The engines were even turned over once a month.